The Major Scale

THE major scale can be defined as a seven note scale separated by the following intervocalic distances: whole-step, whole-step, half-step, whole-step, whole-step, whole-step, half-step (W W H W W W H). The major scale is the most important scale that we will address. It's the benchmark scale that we compare all other scales and chords to. When you hear a musician describing a scale or chord with terms like "flat three", "sharp seven" etc. they're referring to adjustments of the major scale to create this other scale or chord. "Trust me now, believe me later"... learn the construction of the major scale and know how to use it to create chords and scales as I have and will continue to show you through my lessons.

As I've instructed you in eBook one, it is important to be able to construct major scales across a single string. It's important to see this pattern and to be able to recreate it on any string and from any fret. If you have not done so already, it would behoove you to review that lesson and get that skill down. Knowing this construction is obviously crucial, but then we must graduate to more usable forms of the scale.

See the diagram on the following page for the first form of the major scale that I want you to learn. I use this form all the time to determine the key of a particular song, to construct chords, to analyze chords and a myriad of other musical reasons. Another great thing about this scale, as with all scales on the guitar, is that it is completely mobile or movable. Unlike a lot of other instruments - like the piano or wind instruments - the guitar allows its player to transpose scales very easily by playing the same pattern lower or higher up on the fretboard. That is to say that if you took the G major scale and move all the dots up one fret and play the same exact pattern one fret higher, you will now be playing the G#(sharp) major scale. Move it up another fret and you will now be playing A major. Take that same G major scale and drop it down a half-step, or one fret towards the nut or tuning pegs and you will now be playing in the key of Gb(flat) or F#(sharp). For more advanced guitar players this concept is not new to you. For those that are just coming to understand these concepts its important to understand how the scales move. It will save you a ton of energy and time if you grasp this concept correctly now instead of skipping over it. So again, all the dots within a specific scale will move up uniformly. For instance if you're moving the scale up five frets, every dot moves up five frets exactly. You will use the exact same fingering higher up the neck that you use in lower positions near the nut. This is a skill that can be developed with perseverance and detail. ***Don't be a slacker!*** Learn this scale and open up your playing. As we progress in our studies I'm going to show you that this is the most useful tool for a guitar player to know.

Practice makes perfect, and allowing your fingers to practice what your head just learned is a surefire way to integrate this into your knowledge. So this is how I want you to practice the scale. Place your fretting hand in the second position (this means to slide your hand up one fret from the open position so that your first finger is behind the second fret, your second finger is behind the third fret and so on). For this scale, keep your hand in this position. Don't move your hand up or down the guitar neck while you play the scale. Doing so will better ensure that you play the correct fingers on the correct fret. Now play through the scale slowly and systematically and say the scale step number for each note as you play it (for example one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight (or one)). This will help with developing your ear and understanding the number system. This will also increase your finger dexterity and help to increase speed. Don't try to play the scales quickly, however. That will only slow your learning process. There is plenty of time, once you master the scales, to play them quickly. Once you get G major down, slide the entire form up one fret. Remember that all the notes should move up one fret uniformly and that the fingering will be exactly the same as it just was for the G major scale. Before you play each scale, audibly say the name of the scale (for example, "G# major"). This will help you understand what you are playing. Continue to move the scale up the guitar fretboard one fret at a time and naming the scale before you play it. Do this across the entire fretboard until you get to the end. Make sure that you play the same scale down the fretboard towards the nut. It may take a little figuring out - which is good for your brain - but attempt to play the scale in the open position as well.

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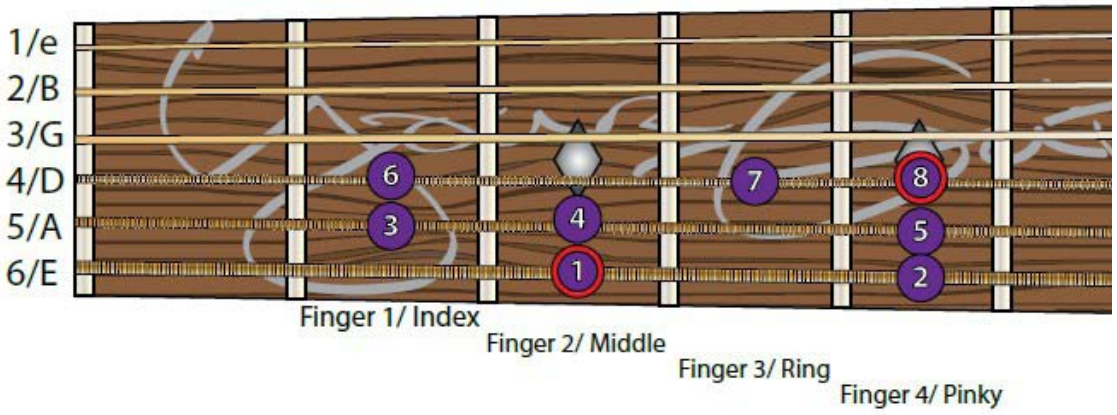
Notice on the second diagram how we can play this same form starting at the fifth string instead of the sixth string. This will save you time by allowing you to memorize one form and use it by starting from either the sixth or fifth strings. To play the fifth string root form of this scale you will start in the same position (2nd) for C major. You will use the same exact fingering and still say the number of each scale step as you play it. Also, don't forget to audibly say the name of the scale before you play it. The letter name of the scale is the first scale degree. Again, play this all the way up the fretboard and play it down to the open position as well.

In regards to picking the scales, the beginner guitarist should probably stick with down strokes while the intermediate and advanced guitar players should incorporate alternate picking (strict up and down picking). Alternate picking can be frustrating and difficult in the beginning (and is for everybody who just first attempts it). So if you're attempting alternate picking, take it slowly. The brain learns a lot faster when you do things slowly. Trying to do this quickly when you haven't done it systematically and slowly will only slow down your learning process. Don't fall into the trap that says you have to practice fast to play fast.

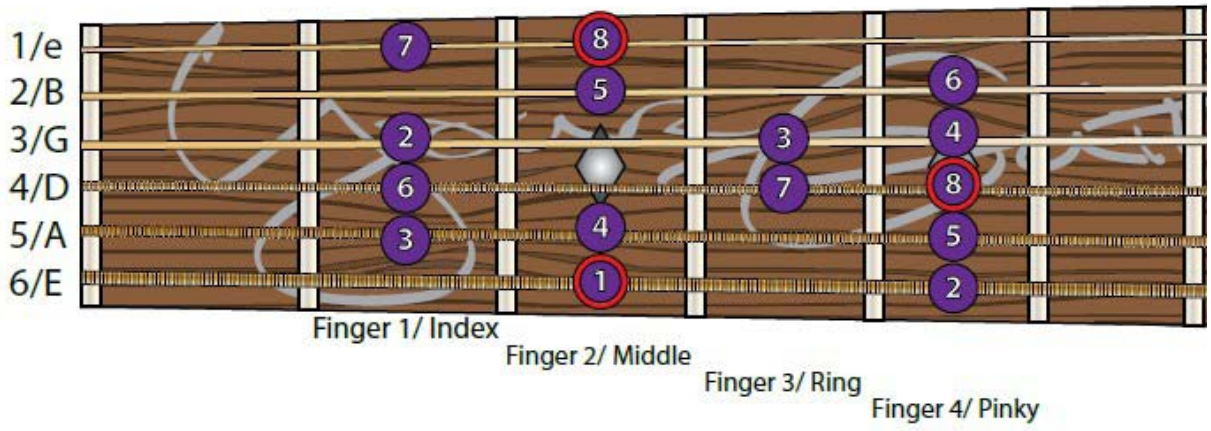
Now stop reading, and go get that guitar!!!

In the following diagrams, the finger I want you to use to fret the indicated note is marked right under the fretboard. The tonic (root) note of the scale is indicated by the red circle around the note .

6th String Root G Major Scale Form (1 octave)



6th String Root G Major Scale Form (2 octave)



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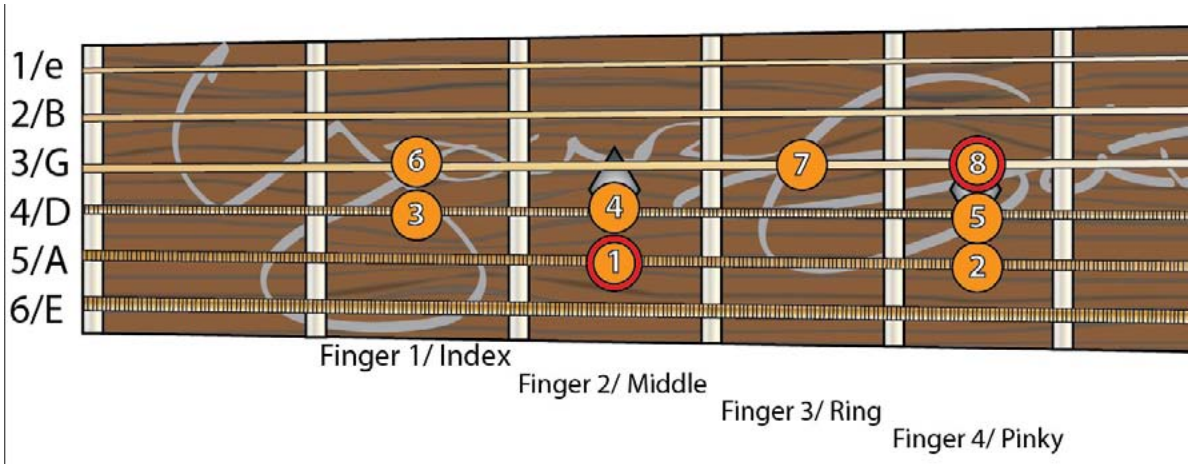
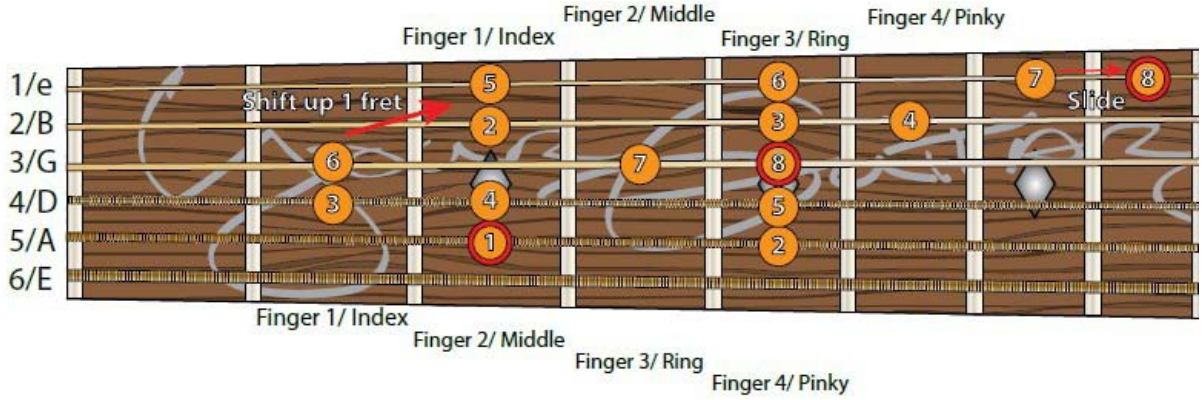
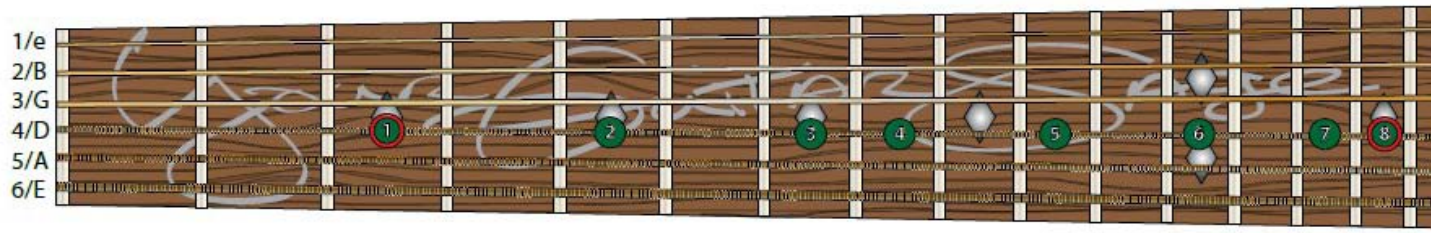
5th String Root C Major Scale Form (1 octave)



5th String Root C Major Scale Form (2 octave)



Single String Scale F Major Scale (1 octave)



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